

EVALUATION RESULTS FROM THE 2005 GOVERNANCE, EQUITY AND HEALTH PARTNERS' MEETING

In April of 2005, Governance, Equity and Health (GEH) held an all-partners' meeting in Saly Portudal, Senegal in order to bring together the GEH community of research partners in a similar manner to the 2003 all-partners' meetings in Pretoria. Each conference day had four sessions that were composed of a morning plenary on "strengthening research and making research matter", thematic working group sessions, structured team activities in small groups and a wrap-up plenary at the end of the day.

Overall, the conference intended to:

1. Provide a forum for a dynamic and effective exchange among GEH researchers;
2. Enable GEH to take stock of its on-going activities and discuss with its partners how these and future activities will contribute towards fulfilling its objectives;
3. Share findings from "Research Matters" consolidation of partner activity/project results; and,
4. Offer skill development workshops for GEH partners and staff.

At the end of the partners' meeting, an evaluation form was distributed in order to gauge participants' feedback and questions on the value of the meeting. Five main themes echoed throughout the commentary from participants:

1. There is a need for preparatory reading material before the meetings start in order to use as a basis for the conceptual elements
2. The exchange between researchers was one of the most useful elements of the meetings.
3. Participants indicated that more meetings such as these, or based on geographic zones, would be useful.
4. The practical aspect of the working groups was very beneficial.
5. There is a strong desire amongst participants to incorporate a governance and health equity lens into their research

The more complete results from this evaluation are summarized below.

QUANTITATIVE QUESTIONS

Results from the quantitative questions on the feedback form show that participants were overwhelmingly satisfied with the meetings. Over half of the respondents indicated that they were satisfied with Part I (Monday to Thursday) of the meetings and close to thirty percent indicated that they were very satisfied. Respondents also indicated high satisfaction in terms of the utility of the morning plenary sessions – close to sixty percent rated the Governance and Health session as useful and the Governance and Financing was rated as very useful by a full majority of the participants.

Indeed, the comments collected on the feedback sheets received several mentions of how satisfied participants were with this particular session.

There is however, some discrepancy between how “useful” and how “interesting” participants found the plenary sessions. In particular, a little over a third of participants rated the Governance and Equity session as interesting while close to half of those same respondents indicated that the session was useful. This may partly be explained by the data collected – six respondents left a blank response for the question addressing level of interest whereas only one respondent skipped the question relating the usefulness of the plenary sessions. The highest-rated plenary session on level of interest was the Governance and Health with sixty-three percent indicating that the session was interesting.

Overwhelmingly, ninety-two percent of survey respondents indicated that it was useful to report working group results in the afternoon plenary session. When asked if the team activity time enabled participants to work with their respective teams or with other researchers toward a “product”, sixty-six percent indicated a positive response, twenty-three thought that it “somewhat” enabled them and close to six percent indicated a negative response.

QUALITATIVE QUESTIONS

Meeting participants were organized into five thematic working groups: “Corruption”, “Plural Health Systems”, “Governance and Health Systems”, “Human Resources” and “Power”. In the survey, respondents were asked how their participation in their respective working group was helpful to their work. Outcomes on the working groups depended primarily on the working group itself, with the largest group – Power – being gauged the most difficult to work within because of the sheer number of participants. At the same time, a number of participants in this group indicated that the discussion that did take place was of a very useful nature. One respondent notes:

“People discussed the concepts, its practical presentation and behaviours and underlying facts (of power). They also touched on how to research it methodologically despite difficulties in useful data collection. Examples discussed were very useful – showing interactions, use and abuse of power...”

Other participants from the Corruption group indicated that it was the first time they had considered this topic in their research and accordingly, found the discussion very useful. One criticism coming from the Human Resources group was that their members were changing daily which made the group cohesion a big challenge. It was suggested that some direction on how the material would be used afterward would have been very useful and that background information or preparatory reading would have allowed the discussion to be more focused. Last, respondents indicated overwhelmingly that the mix of conceptual discussions with practical, informal dialogue was very useful

in informing their work as researchers. One respondent notes: “*(The) specific examples and other perspectives helped with setting holistic treatment and discourse.*”

Survey respondents were next asked to comment on what they liked most about the partners’ meeting. The vast majority emphasized the utility of meeting face-to-face with other researchers and the opportunity to engage on a conceptual, practical and informal level. The Power group’s comments centered around the idea of the partners’ meetings as meaningful and collaborative. One respondent notes, “*(The meetings) were instructive for the concepts, practicality and meaningful networking and real mentorship*”. Another item that several respondents from the Plural Health Systems group discussed was the increased sensitivity to GEH concepts and how to relate them into their own work. One individual wrote that “*(the) increased sensitivity to GEH issues (and) shifts in daily activities to respond to the changing dynamics of the day’s session was great.*” Overall, the key word in the responses to the question on what respondents liked most about the meetings was “exchange” as one francophone respondent expanded on: “*1) Les échanges 2) Les échanges et, 3) Les échanges*”.

The next question asked respondents to comment on what they liked least about the meetings. The two overarching themes from respondents’ answers to this question were: 1) a perceived abstract quality of the plenary sessions which detracted from the coherence of the meeting and, 2) the difficulties to communicate with French-speaking partners meaningfully in a bilingual environment. Respondents further indicated that the plenary sessions lacked focus during the session and needed to have a synthesis at the end of each. One respondent suggested that it may have been better to begin the meeting with a presentation of the different projects and key challenges they face. Another respondent made a more detailed response on a criticism of the morning plenaries:

Morning plenaries ended with no clear summing up or highlighting the issues, which meant each participant took it in her own way. Consequently, the working group discussions (session II) become largely directionless, only guided by the 4 or 5 questions circulated in the sheets. Each of the working group themes should have been taken up in the specific context of the themes raised in the morning plenaries. In the absence of it, working group discussions covered everything under the sun and came up with “shopping lists” for the evening wrap-up plenary. Instead, a morning plenary with presentations, open discussion and summing up and highlighting major issues followed by working group sessions (with no evening plenary) and a plenary at the end would have been more productive and fruitful.

On the issue of the language barrier, most of the criticism was from English-speaking participants and the criticism was more self-directed. Two respondents indicated “*my inability to speak French*” as a major detractor from being able to meaningfully communicate with French-speaking colleagues and one respondent indicated that she/he will endeavor to enroll in French language classes after the meetings. Respondents also mentioned that the translation available was of good quality but that because the discussion in French moved so quickly, it made the English translation difficult to follow.

Next, respondents were asked to indicate what type of follow-up they thought would be useful to promote the support and demand for research on governance, equity and health. The most frequent response from this question was the need for networks of researchers to be established as well as strengthening and promoting regional networking. Suggestions of formal electronic exchange networks were echoed by several respondents – mostly in the interest of keeping up the momentum generated from the meetings. Following upon the theme of networking was a strong indication that respondents felt the need for increased, periodic, face-to-face meetings based on geographic zones. One participant noted that what is needed is, “...*scientific meetings where rigorous technical papers could be presented, discussed and improved with a view to publication.*” Another respondent demonstrated that joint meetings could be used to discuss specifically how to enhance policy take-up. The third most frequent response from this question was the necessity of encouraging research and / or publication of papers. Respondents noted the importance of collaborative research between GEH projects and increased assistance with publication or opportunities for publication as useful ways of promoting demand for research. Two respondents mentioned that it would be useful to encourage those who attended the conference to write short concept papers to relate experiences and share lessons learned and / or to compile and circulate possible research questions resulting from the theme topics discussed. Lastly, several respondents indicated that the work done by Research Matters is a very practical way to promote support and demand by channeling its products to government and other donors – with the IDRC and SDC acting as brokers.

The last substantial question in the survey asked respondents to identify one thing that they will do differently as a result of the partners’ meeting. Two main themes came out of this question: making research matter in terms of policy and the application of the GEH principles to research activities. With respect to the former theme, one respondent indicated they she / he would like to “*actively develop mechanisms to make my research outputs matter (through) dissemination.*” Another respondent wrote about the importance of focusing on a research agenda that would have direct impact and lead to action while several others mentioned the importance of focusing closely on governance and equity in order to support a research-to-policy agenda. In terms of the latter theme, the application of GEH principles, one respondent elucidated:

(I) will apply (the) GEH concept lens to all aspects of project activity – and that lens is now benefiting from the broad scope of discourse and experience at the conference.

Other comments included some specifics around examining the role of the researcher and research-users in the public health sector as activists and agents of change and incorporating communications and gender into research projects. The responses were overwhelmingly indicative of the partners’ reflections on what they had taken directly from either formal sessions or informal discussions with other meeting participants.

Finally, respondents had several comments on the logistics, planning and accommodations of the conference. While this question garnered the greatest number of blank responses, several respondents indicated that it would have been better to invite fewer participants – only one representative per project – in order to avoid the “scattered” atmosphere of some of the meetings. Conversely, however, another respondent indicated that it would have been better to have more than one representative from her / his particular organization in order to offer a more balanced take-home message. One respondent indicated that the location near the beach was ideal whilst several others mentioned that a quieter location would be preferable given the diversity of guests staying at the accommodation.

Summary of GEH Senegal Partners Meeting Evaluations

Survey Number	Group	How was participation in their respective working group was helpful to your work?	What did you like the most about the Parnters' meeting?	What did you like the least about the Partners' meeting?	What type of follow-up would be useful to promote the support and demand for research on governance, equity and health?	What would you have organized differently?	Do you have any comments on the logistics, accomodation and organization of the conference?	Any other comments?
1	power	own presentation not up to scratch	stimulating discussion - within and out of program activities		research gaps	will have focus on gender & communications	good	
2	Human Resources	skewed initially, improved on second day, group smaller on 3rd day	1) journey and conceptual exploration 2) experience - g,e,h	1) grappling with meaning of terms, old & new 2) some participants were not "journeying"	1) follow up on "research for empowerment"	examine the role of the researcher and research-users in the public health sector as activists and agents of change		
4	power	useful for participation / exchange in smaller settings with persons you didnt know. Personal relations.	concepts, practicality and meaningful networking & real mentorship	only individual from organization - would have been helpful to have other team members attend this conference as well	to encourage those who attended the conference to write short concept papers to relate experiences and lessons learned in order to share the lessons learned	will continue to encourage use of governance at the methodological level to make research process make a difference - not just for findings	glad to have had time to walk on beach and unstructured working time	impressive to see how you set the stage for discussions
5	power	empowering to look at my work from a different perspective	enabled me to consider shifting the focus of my research to emphasize the social determinants of health	long sessions	more emphasis should be put on the IDRC to build capacity for young researchers.	I will start by trying to develop my competencies around issues of governance		
6	power	yes - ppl discussed the concepts, its practical presentation & behaviours, underlying facts. They also touched on how to research it methodologically despite difficulties in useful data collection. Examples discussed were very useful - showing interactions, use and abuse of power between different partners	1) new ideas on issues on discussion 2) interactions w/francophone partners 3) EXCHANGE 4) beach air 5) feedback video	1) discussion in french went so quickly that the translation was difficult to grasp 2) time for some presentation inadequate (e.g. Jim Smith) 3) some presenters were not prepared with ppt - flight of ideas	Discussion email list, feedback on seminar proceedings, funding for further interaction between research group	will broaden the baseline for my research on PPP in relation to private practitioners		
7	power	Yes - expanded on notion of power in relation to funding and donors	Exchange - networking and sharing of experiences, opportunities for collaboration					

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8	power	not very useful - lacked focus and was not taking off from the issues discussed at the morning plenary. So, our output was a shopping list.	The diversity of issues that came up for discussion.		Scientific meetings where rigorous technical papers could be presented, discussed and improved with a view to publication	Will bring concerns of governance and equity more explicitly in my work		
10	power	Yes - it allowed us to better identify where gouvernance fits into our research initiative	face to face meeting, workgroups	Very little coherence between the panels and the workgroups	circulate a report about this meeting to all the participants	workgroups		
12	Human Resources	workgroups NOT useful - too few ppl have done work in HR... our discussions tended to be generalised and the output was of very poor quality	financing and equity session -	plenary sessions were too abstract				
13	Governance and Health Systems	the methodology was very interesting and allows me to ask more pertinent questions	working groups	plenary sessions were too abstract				
15	Plural Health Systems	helped to place my work within broader picture	working groups - more personal experiences which had practical implications for my own work			look at the bigger picture of GEH		
16	Corruption	good elaboration of corruptive practices	participants' reactions	absence of a synthesis at the end of each session	periodic meetings organized by geographic zone	sessions needed a synthesis	fewer long sessions	
17	Corruption	good elaboration of corruptive practices	diversity of participants	confusion on the notion of governance				
18	Corruption	very good for networking	1) the exchange 2) the exchange 3) the exchange	lacked focus a little bit		1) would have organised a committee of "sages" 2) more research presentations		
20	Human Resources	yes, will be incorporating this into an article currently in progress	exchange with colleagues working in teh same field	consecutive presentations and timing		use of the terms of equity		
21	Corruption	well paced and organized	good conceptual / study blend	speakers spoke for too long	collaborative research between GEH projects	better framing of research		

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22	Human Resources	given a interesting spin for our research	les travaux de groupe - qui on permis un meilleur rapprochement entre les participants et les échanges informels					
23	power	somewhat. Interesting to hear others' work but some of the information was so diverse that it was hard to think of any way it might be applicable						
24	Corruption	good understanding of concepts	logistical support, accompanying documentation	length of meetings	navigating the website of GEH	daily plan was too long!		
25	Corruption	a little useful		concepts were not defined from the beginning				
26	power	yes - exploring ideas & sharing knowledge	exchange and networking	better to begin the meeting with a presentation of the different projects and key challenges they face	Follow up with partners re: what they did following the meeting as a result of their participation in the meeting	Make link with newer partners		
27	power	Yes - it was helpful in that it looked at the levels of power and described / made clear the dyanmics of power and how it affects / impacts governance	Governance and Financing		Regular contribution / newsletter to which organisations contribute to GEH publications	Make use of the research results		
30	power	yes, useful. We had some trouble increasing the levels of debate but at least we have had a very rich and critical discussion.	exchange, face to face		would be good to be connected more to IDRC-related activities and being connected with IDRC activities	apply discussions in my own analysis of information related with our projects		
34	Governance and Health Systems	yes because the moderator managed everything very well	exchanges		putting in place a network of researchers			
35	Human Resources	yes - but members changed daily which was problematic, was unclear how the material would be used afterward, some pre-reading would have been useful for focus	networking, face-to-face aspect	many ppl lacked confidence to speak in the large room		focusing on a governance agenda in my own research		

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36	power	diversity of backgrounds	diversity of participants	inability to speak french	communication and continuation of initiatives such as Research Matters	will think not only from my own persepective		
37	Human Resources	yes useful - especially bc of the exchanges with other methodological and conceptual researchers! tools discussed - very practical			relations between researchers & IDRC concerning electronic exchange			
38	Plural Health Systems	specific examples / other perspectives helped with setting holistic treatment and discourse	increased sensitivity to GEH issues - shifts in daily activities to respond to the changing dynamics of the day's sessions was great	more opportunity for project presentations and specifics to encourage networking	1) channeling RM products to government and other donors IDRC and SDC as brokers	will apply GEH concept lens to all aspects or project activity - and that lens is now benefitting from broad scope of discourse and experience in conference		
39	Corruption	hadnt thought of connection between corruption and equity	engaging with researchers on conceptual frameworks and tools		meetings to take place on regular basis	make research matter in terms of policy		learning experience
40	power	allowed me to better understand local power in setting up a health program	Exchange					
43	Plural Health Systems	highlighted many areas	identification of key GEH concepts and how to relate them to my work - SHARING with others	lack of time for feedback and synthesis	1) coordination of interested parties on particular themes	actively develop mechanisms to make my research outputs matter - dissemination		
44	Corruption		engaging with researchers on conceptual frameworks and tools	afternoon report back sessions - time could have been added onto the morning plenary or team meetings	assistance with publication or opportunities for publication	conceptual framework for researchers		thank you to GEH team
45	Plural Health Systems	yes - discussion were participatory and translation very helpful	1) knowing and understanding other partners 2) opportunities to discuss face-to-face		joint meetings to discuss how to enhance policy take-up	to focus more closely on governance and equity for policy take up	more information on visas, etc for delegates	
46	Corruption	hadnt thought of connection between corruption and equity	working group meetings	wrap up meeting	convene support of other donor agencies		very good	nex time prepare papers in advance

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47	power	not very useful - group was too big and too scattered. We talked in the abstract.	networking, interpersonal experience	my inability to speak french	networking groups to produce work in progress reports on their ongoing experience	follow up via networking		
49	Human Resources	participation was helpful to my work since there have always been problems of HR - particularly health personnel in terms of quality/ quantity etc	1)organisation 2) themes for discussion	The language barrier	promoting and strengthening regional networking	focusing on a research agenda that would have direct impact and lead to action	flights - long routes	
50	Plural Health Systems	despite the research gaps in realising G&e in health there are still many opportunities	working group meetings - diversity	Activity Time - which could have been used to conclude group work	compilation & circulation of possible research questions resulting from theme topics discussed	look beyond my work space for opportunities to propagate the geh agenda		
51	Human Resources	exchange of country information very useful.. Esp ranking and prioritisation from urgent to long term	working group - specific topic discussions were very therapeutic to the concepts and defn attempts of the morning plenaries	inability of many participants to formulate succinctly a question or point	a 2-3 page document illustrating the diversity richness and maturation of research endeavours between countries		quieter location & less numbers of research groups - 1 rep per project	
53	power	more or less, but the sessions were not well organised and were very general in nature	face to face meeting, relaxed ambiance		two types of projects: 1) classical team projects 2) projects which address cross-cutting issues (between teams and continents)			

Overall how satisfied are you with Part I (Monday to Thursday) of the meeting?	
	Response Total
Very unsatisfied	3
Unsatisfied	1
Neutral	4
Satisfied	32
Very Satisfied	16
Total Respondents	56
(skipped this question)	0

How useful did you find the morning plenary sessions?				
	Not very useful	Useful	Very Useful	Response Total
Governance and Health	2	32	21	55
Governance and Equity	5	23	26	54
Governance and financing	1	22	31	54
Final Thursday morning wrap-up	4	29	20	53
Total Respondents	55			
(skipped this question)	1			

How interesting did you find the morning plenary sessions?				
	Not very interesting	Interesting	Very interesting	Response Total
Governance and health	1	30	17	48
Governance and equity	4	27	18	49
Governance and financing	1	20	29	50
Final Thursday morning wrap up	3	24	19	46
Total Respondents	50			
(skipped this question)	6			

Do you think it was helpful to report the results of the working group in the afternoon plenary session?	
	Response Total
Yes	47
No	4

Total Respondents	51
(skipped this question)	5

Did the team activity time enable you to work with your team or with other researchers toward a "product"?	
	Response Total
No	3
Somewhat	12
Yes	34
Preferred going to the beach to think	2
Total Respondents	51
(skipped this question)	5